

# ERITREA

# DHAPP

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HIV/AIDS  
PREVENTION PROGRAM

REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF HIV/AIDS  
AMONG UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN  
SELECTED AFRICAN NATIONS AND BEYOND

## WINNING BATTLES IN THE WAR AGAINST HIV/AIDS

### BACKGROUND

#### Country Statistics

The population of Eritrea is estimated to be 4.6 million, with an average life expectancy of 52.2 years. Eritrea has no official language(s); the most common languages are Tigrinya, Arabic, Tigre, and Kunama. The estimated literacy rate is 58.6%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Eritrea's economy was devastated by its 30-year-long independence war with Ethiopia and hurt again by the strain of the 1998–2000 border war. The economy is based primarily in subsistence agriculture, with 80% of the population involved in farming or herding. Annual per capita income is \$900.

#### HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 2.7%, with an estimated 60,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 70% of reported cases are among young adults aged 20 to 39 years. Identified risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners, perinatal transmission, and transmission through blood and blood products. HIV prevalence varies considerably by region, ranging from under 2% in the west to over 7% in the southeast.



#### Military Statistics

The size of the armed forces is approximately 200,000. As of this annual report, no information regarding HIV prevalence in the military was available.

### PROGRAM RESPONSE

#### Military-to-Military Technical Assistance

DHAPP staff provided technical assistance to the Eritrean Defense Force (EDF) during an in-country assist visit, 17–23 July 2005.

DHAPP staff met with the following members of the country team: Director of Health Services for the



EDF, Health Team Leader for US Agency for International Development (USAID), Project Management Specialist for USAID, Procurement & Contracts agent for USAID, and the US Ambassador to Eritrea. With DHAPP guidance, the EDF has now established a means of procuring laboratory equipment.

DHAPP staff members are committed to the development of a standard operating procedures (SOP) for the EDF. The EDF will use this SOP in training its newly hired program manager.



## **OUTCOMES & IMPACT**

### **Prevention/Care/Treatment**

The DHAPP office is committed to continuing its collaborative relationship with the EDF and US Embassy officials there. Funding was approved for a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention program in the EDF; however, due to a variety of challenges, funding was not sent to commence these activities during fiscal year 2005. At the end of the fiscal year, the Defense Attaché Office hired a program manager. DHAPP staff will be working with this program manager to commence activities in Eritrea in early FY06.

